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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 001405

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAIR](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: ETIHAD FLYING TO KENNEDY, ABU DHABI AIRPORT
EXPANSION

REF: ABU DHABI 01199

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Etihad Airways recently reported to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rep that it has decided to fly to Kennedy, instead of Newark as was previously reported. Econoff and FAA rep met with several members of the Supervision Committee for the Expansion of the Abu Dhabi International Airport (SCADIA) to discuss plans for the airport,s development. Although the expansion team has many good ideas regarding the airport,s upgrade, FAA rep recommended they hire a technical expert to coordinate the project. The Expansion Committee told emboffs that one of two U.S. firms will design the new airport terminal, although the final decision has not been made yet. End summary.

Etihad Airways flying to Kennedy beginning July 1

¶2. (SBU) Etihad Airways has changed its earlier decision to fly to Newark (Reftel) and will now fly to Kennedy (JFK) instead. Etihad,s inaugural flight to JFK will be on July 1, 2006. Etihad would like to begin advertising the proposed route, but must first receive permission from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT requires FAA and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) approval prior to granting the authorization; the approval process is still ongoing.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Etihad officials indicated the airline has decided to fly to JFK instead of Newark because New York is "more prestigious" and customers are more likely to fly to New York rather than New Jersey. Etihad,s main competitor, Emirates Airline based in Dubai, currently flies to Kennedy. End comment.

Expansion of Abu Dhabi Airport

¶4. (U) Econoff and FAA Representative met with members of SCADIA to discuss airport development. The SCADIA officials asked FAA rep many detailed questions on planning, designing, and constructing the expansion. They also asked about operational issues, such as air space and route structure concerns. (Comment: Although the expansion team has many good ideas regarding the airport,s upgrade, their questions indicate they need further technical expertise to implement the ideas. FAA rep recommended SCADIA hire a technical expert to coordinate the project. End comment.)

¶5. (U) Project officials told emboffs that one of two U.S. companies will design the new terminal, but did not reveal the name of the design firm. Airport expansion officials are anxious to begin work with the design team in order to coordinate the location and height of the new control tower. Currently, Abu Dhabi International Airport has one runway. Work has begun on the second runway, which will be capable of handling aircraft as large as the Airbus A380. The second

runway should be completed in January 2008, which is the expected delivery date of Etihad,s A380. The two runways will be 1850 meters apart, which allows for simultaneous and independent operations, greatly enhancing the airport capabilities. Because of the large distance between the two runways, the control tower will need to be "unusually" high. SCADIA officials have proposed a 110 meter tower and asked FAA rep for further information related to building a control tower of such high elevation. FAA rep provided detailed information to project officials on air traffic control tower design and construction.

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